

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2019: *The Book of Revelation*

Lesson 5 The Seven Seals

Read for this week's study

Revelation 6:1–14; Leviticus 26:21–26; Ezekiel 4:16; Deuteronomy 32:43; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10.

Memory Text

“ ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth’ ” (Revelation 5:9, 10, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Opening of the First Seal
- III. The Second and Third Seals
- IV. The Scene of the Fourth Seal
- V. The Opening of the Fifth Seal
- VI. The Opening of the Sixth Seal
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The lesson asserts that Revelation 3:21 gives us the key to the meaning of the seven seals. Notice the four main parts of Revelation 3:21. How do these four clauses relate to what is going on in Revelation 4, 5, 6, and 7? What does that tell us about the meaning of Revelation 6? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Revelation 6:1-8 along with Leviticus 26:21-26 and Matthew 24:1-14. What do you learn about the meaning of the first four seals on the basis of these parallels? What do the consequences of observing or breaking the Old Testament covenant have to do with New Testament experience? How is the concept of Israel in the New Testament different from the Old? (Sunday's lesson)
3. Read Revelation 6:1-2. Compare with Revelation 19:11-16. What is the meaning of the rider on the white horse in the first seal? What is the first seal describing? How does it help to know that, in Christ, we are on the winning side, regardless of historical circumstances? (Sunday's lesson)

4. Read Revelation 6:3-4. What does the red color of this horse tell us about it? What relation does the imagery have with the gospel, if any? Read Revelation 6:5-6 along with Leviticus 26:26 and Ezekiel 4:16. Why is the horse black and what does this imagery signify? What do the grain, the wind and the oil represent? Why is there a famine only of grain? (Monday's lesson)
5. Read Revelation 6:7-8. What is being portrayed here? What is the significance of "quarters" of the earth? If all four horsemen affect quarters of the earth, what is being portrayed in this passage? What are death and Hades, and how do they relate to this passage? (Tuesday's lesson)
6. Review the messages to the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum and Thyatira. How does the situation of those four churches compare with the first four seals? Is there a historical progression in Christian history in view in the four horsemen? Do the four horsemen describe the progress of the gospel (white horse) and varying reactions to it (red, black and pale horses) or do all four horses represent the work of Satan bringing destruction on the earth? The key to the answer lies in how one interprets the white horse. Is it representing Christ and the gospel or a counterfeit of the gospel?
7. Read Revelation 6:9-10. What is happening here in your own words? Read Revelation 6:11 along with Deuteronomy 32:43 and Psalm 79:10. What is heaven's response to the prayers of God's martyred people? What comfort is it to know that God will set all things right one day? (Wednesday's lesson)
8. Read Revelation 6:12-14. The SDA pioneers read this passage as covering about 100 years of history. What evidence is there in the text for such a reading? Compare this passage with Revelation 11:13 and 16:20. How do the latter passages help us understand the earthquake(s) in the sixth seal? Does a comparison with Matthew 24:29-30 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 help or hinder an understanding of the sixth seal? (Thursday's lesson)
9. What payoff is there, if any, in reading Revelation 6 historically? Our pioneers understood the sixth seal to be fulfilled in the Lisbon earthquake (1755), the Dark day of 1780 and the falling of the stars in 1833. Does it matter if all of these represent recurring natural events (the Dark Day is now thought to have occurred because of massive forest fires in the western US and Canada)? (Friday's lesson)
10. What does the existence of suffering and persecution throughout history tell us about God? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

About a century and a half ago, there arose in various parts of the world, the growing conviction that the coming of Christ was very near. You know the history about how Bible students in many different churches began to see in certain remarkable events the fulfillment of some of the signs that Jesus had given to his disciples in Matthew 24:29: “The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky.” (NIV)

They saw in the darkening of the sun on May 19, 1780, and in the remarkable falling of the stars on November 13, 1833, combined with their study of certain other lines of prophecy in Daniel and Revelation, lines that pointed to the dates 1798 and 1844 as being the dates of certain important events. They saw in all these things an accumulation of evidence, signs, and indications that the long-looked-for advent was very near. We do know that it is a historical fact that the great second-advent movement began at that time. Though some are now puzzled about the signs and the dates, it is an incontrovertible fact of history that that was when the great second-advent movement did begin. The time when it began is the time when all those remarkable signs and prophetic periods seemed to come together. It is not just one date, one event, one piece of evidence. It's all that evidence combined. That's the way God has always sought to convince us throughout the history of the conflict. Not to have a little here and a little there, but an accumulation of evidence.

Some of those eager Adventists were led by their study of the times and the evidences to begin giving special attention to the messages of the three angels in Revelation 14. They came to the conclusion that the time had arrived for these three messages of warning and invitation to be given to the whole world. A very bold venture they undertook, and the excitement and the disappointment of those days is all part of religious history. There are still thousands, even millions of Christians the world around who agree that those early Adventists had indeed seen God's signal that the second coming was near. They didn't read it correctly at first. It was not a signal to pack for the trip up to heaven. It was rather a call from God to prepare the whole world for his coming. That's why we are still here, because we haven't done it yet.

Now it is true that time has continued much longer than early Adventists expected—the signs that so stirred them are now well over a hundred years old. In fact, the first of the signs, the darkening of the sun and the turning of the moon to blood on May 19, 1780—that sign is now 204 years old. But are we surprised? Are we even ashamed, that our God would be willing to wait this long?

Are we concerned about our reputation or his? The good news is the gospel; it's not about us. Sometimes I think we make that mistake. The good news is not about us. The good news is about our God. Now if by our failure to complete our task we may have contributed to the long delay, then we deserve to be ashamed. But the longer God waits, the more gracious he looks. His delay only confirms the good news. I think the delay should lead us to speak with pride of

our God and not to make the awful mistake that Jonah made. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #19, “How Soon Will the Conflict Be Over?” recorded June, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/19MMCAG>*

Lou: Let’s move to another question: “Why wasn’t the conflict ended with Christ’s victory at the cross and his resurrection? Why has pain and suffering gone on since then?”

Graham: We have an evening coming up, “God Waits for His Children to Grow Up.” In the narrower, more legal view, if it’s done at the cross, why wait any longer? In the larger, great controversy view, there are terrible events to occur at the end, and there will need to be a generation— not of children, or even “dear idiots” of Galatia. There needs to be a group of Jobs who are so grown up and settled into the truth, that like Paul they could say, “If even an angel from heaven should come with a different gospel,” and there he is, pretending to be Christ, “he is wrong and we will not believe it.” God in mercy waits. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #16 with Lou Venden, “God’s Last Pleading with His Children” recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>*

Lou: One of our congregation went out of her way to type up the question that she has had for a number of years. She says this, “Can you give a reason why a loving God would allow a good Christian woman to be murdered? She was a good help in her small church. She was the treasurer of her church. The last Sabbath of her life they had a consecration service at the church. She dedicated herself anew to God, and she was murdered that afternoon at her house. She was the treasurer, and she had money at her house, and apparently that was the reason that someone broke in and she was killed.” And this individual says, “The reason I know about this is that she was my sister.”

Graham: Again, happy the person who knows God very well at a time like this. It doesn’t mean that we would know the answer. I don’t think Job ever found out why those things happened to him that did. But all he knew was that those theologians were wrong. And those theologians came to Job and said, “You cannot be asking God about this.” I mean, Job was crying to God with intense feeling and saying, “God, how can you do this to me? I’ve been your good friend all this time, and now you won’t even speak to me. You won’t explain this.” And the theologians were going on with their very legalistic explanation. Finally he said, “I wish you brethren would be quiet. I appreciate your coming, but you’re not helping me at all.” None of their explanations were good. He said, “If only I could talk to God, I’m sure I could clear this up.” And eventually the boldness of his inquires of God reached such a level that those three men were worried for

their friend that God would surely zap him on the spot for daring to inquire. And God broke in and said, "Job, you have said of me what is right."

So if a person is wrestling with this, we may not find out; I'm sure we won't find out the answer to every such absolutely unfair thing that happens on this planet during this emergency. But some things we know for sure; the kind of person God is, and that he welcomes us to lodge our inquiries with feeling, and hopefully we will trust him enough to wait for the answer.

Lou: Acquainted well enough to trust when we don't know how to answer all these things.

Graham: That's the thing. And I'd like to think that that sister was such a saint; don't worry about her. She will arise in the resurrection and say, "What am I doing here?" She will have no complaints. She'll be looking for her sister. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #6 with Lou Venden, "Evaluating the Evidence" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/6MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Now the Saviour's eye penetrates the future; He beholds the broader fields in which, after His death, the disciples are to be witnesses for Him. His prophetic glance takes in the experience of His servants through all the ages till He shall come the second time. He shows His followers the conflicts they must meet; He reveals the character and plan of the battle. He lays open before them the perils they must encounter, the self-denial that will be required. He desires them to count the cost, that they may not be taken unawares by the enemy. Their warfare is not to be waged against flesh and blood, but "against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Ephesians 6:12, R. V. They are to contend with supernatural forces, but they are assured of supernatural help. All the intelligences of heaven are in this army. And more than angels are in the ranks. The Holy Spirit, the representative of the Captain of the Lord's host, comes down to direct the battle. Our infirmities may be many, our sins and mistakes grievous; but the grace of God is for all who seek it with contrition. The power of Omnipotence is enlisted in behalf of those who trust in God. {DA 352.2}

Heaven's plan of salvation is broad enough to embrace the whole world. God longs to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life. And He will not permit any soul to be disappointed who is sincere in his longing for something higher and nobler than anything the world can offer. Constantly He is sending His angels to those who, while surrounded by circumstances the most discouraging, pray in faith for some power higher than themselves to take possession of them and bring deliverance and peace. In various ways God will reveal Himself to them and will place

them in touch with providences that will establish their confidence in the One who has given Himself a ransom for all, “that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.” Psalm 78:7. {PK 377.1}

The truth will have the same molding influence upon hearts whatever the nationalities. Every human heart that accepts the truth will bow to the majesty of its sway, and when Christ is abiding in the heart by faith they will be of one mind, for Christ is not divided. They will be strong in His strength, happy and united in His peace. The truth is the same in its subduing power upon all hearts. It will refine and ennoble the heart of the receiver. {OHC 171.5}

To His faithful followers Christ has been a daily companion, a familiar friend. They have lived in close, constant communion with God. Upon them the glory of the Lord has risen. In them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has been reflected. Now they rejoice in the undimmed rays of the brightness and glory of the King in His majesty. They are prepared for the communion of heaven; for they have heaven in their hearts. {AG 358.3}

Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved. {FLB 58.2}

Men have the power to quench the Spirit of God; the power of choosing is left with them. They are allowed freedom of action. They may be obedient through the name and grace of our Redeemer, or they may be disobedient, and realize the consequences. {FLB 58.3}

The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not lie in any sudden word or deed; it is the firm, determined resistance of truth and evidence. {FLB 58.4}

It is not that God sends out a decree that man shall not be saved. He does not throw a darkness before the eyes which cannot be penetrated. But man at first resists a motion of the Spirit of God, and, having once resisted, it is less difficult to do so the second time, less the third, and far less the fourth. Then comes the harvest to be reaped from the seed of unbelief and resistance. {FLB 58.5}

On the other hand, every ray of light cherished will yield a harvest of light. Temptation once resisted will give power to more firmly resist the second time; every new victory gained over self will smooth the way for higher and nobler triumphs. Every victory is a seed sown to eternal life. {FLB 58.6}

No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent. {FLB 58.8}

God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself. Everyone who stifles the admonitions of conscience is sowing the seeds of unbelief, and these will produce a sure harvest. {COL 84.4}

No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. "Man turns from God, not God from him." Our heavenly Father follows us with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests with the sinner. By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power. Thus he passes on from one stage of resistance to another, until at last the light will fail to impress, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. Then even "the light that is in thee" has become darkness. The very truth we do know has become so perverted as to increase the blindness of the soul. {MB 93.1}

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will; and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not desire to be set free, if we will not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. {SC 34.2}

The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Co-operation with that power is man's greatest need. {Ed 29.1}

At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer. {DA 669.4}

The Comforter is called "the Spirit of truth." His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself. {DA 671.1}

In the gift of the Spirit, Jesus gave to man the highest good that heaven could bestow. . . . It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and

cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon the church. . . . It is the privilege of every son and daughter of God to have the indwelling of the Spirit. {OHC 150.3}

The long night of gloom is trying, but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God's unwillingness to have His people perish, has been the reason of so long delay.—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 194. (1868) {Ev 694.2}

Christ has made every provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Immanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. He desires that we shall reveal His own joy in our lives. {PK 720.1}